Listening for Success

Today, we’re going to examine how the way your clients listen determines what will show up for them in their lives.

We all communicate in a manner that is influenced by our past experiences, prejudices, assumptions, and interpretations, mistakenly assuming that others see the world in the same way and hear exactly what we intend. In other words, we filter what we say and what we hear from others through our own perceptions, prejudices and outlooks. Unfortunately, we simultaneously ignore one obvious fact — everyone has a different, individual set of personal perceptions that directly affect their communication.

This filter of personal perceptions and subconscious interpretations is what we call a person’s listening attitude. When you’re engaged in a conversation, your listening — positive or negative, confident and supportive or insecure and needy — will have a direct impact on how you receive the words of the people with whom you are in discussion – and how they interpret your words.

One of the greatest myths is that we listen to others from the perspective that our listening is empty. That is, that we are a blank slate and when others speak, we hear exactly whatever they are saying and intending that we get from their speaking. For example, notice how often you either check out of a conversation and stop listening or how often you find yourself listening to your own opinions and judgments about what is said. This type of listening does not support your clients’ personal effectiveness and ability to communicate powerfully.

Nothing can show up for your clients if they are not open for it — that is, if they do not have a listening for it. Your clients live in the listening other people provide for them. If the listening of others for your clients’ speaking is a generous listening, the chances of them really being heard and understood accurately are far greater than if the listening they are speaking into is one that is closed off.

For example, your client may be an accomplished and successful businessperson leading a multinational corporation. When they speak into the listening of their colleagues, they are heard as charismatic and powerful. In contrast, when they’re speaking with a person who may only be listening to them as someone who is trying to get something from them, this is exactly how they’re likely to be perceived – unless they take responsibility for managing the listening they are speaking into. Because your clients will not be able to reach others in a way that is different from the listening they have for them, suggest to them that they make themselves aware of
what the listening is for their speaking. With this awareness, they will create the opportunity to speak in a way that they can make an impact. To be truly effective, encourage your clients to take responsibility for creating the listening that they want others to have for them. They can do this by actually speaking to the issue they see needing to be addressed. Suggest to your clients that they make no careless assumptions of how others may listen to their words.

For example, if they hear a hesitancy or tone of mistrust coming from someone with whom they are in conversation about exploring a potential working relationship of some sort, have them take a moment to stop the conversation and address their suspicion. Your client might say something like, “Mrs. Jones, I want you to know that I am appreciative that you are taking the time to explore the possibilities of how we might support each other in some way. I just want you to know that I am a firm believer in win-win type relationships and have the utmost respect for your needs.” In this way your client has taken responsibility for their communication to be effective.

Teach your clients to train others in regard to how they are to be treated and how they expect others are to interact with them. If your client finds that people consistently treat him poorly, without respect, not valuing what he has to offer, he likely has not trained others otherwise by maintaining a posture that says, “I am a person of high value with much to share.”

Encourage your clients to learn to train people how to treat them by making requests that cause others to honor them in their interactions. Do not allow them to settle for behavior that is inappropriate for the person that they have chosen to be. Champion your clients to take full responsibility for the listening into which they are speaking while managing how they are heard with clear, clean communication that will skyrocket their effectiveness.

Remind your clients that being aware of the listening they have for others is as important as being aware of the listening others have for them. If your client considers someone to not be particularly powerful or intelligent, she’ll likely miss any significant contribution that person might make to her. Suggest that your clients listen to each person with an expectation that they have something significant to contribute to them in their conversation. Doing so can cause your client to get something significant from the conversation that they may have missed without such a powerful intention. This will support them to realize a totally different perspective with new and previously undiscovered possibilities emerging.
Encourage your clients to listen to what is spoken, as well as to what is unsaid in any conversation. Have them pay attention to how their personal power will increase in proportion to their ability to listen in a whole new manner. Your clients will only be capable of generating a new listening to hear others when they recognize how they typically listen. Challenge your clients to take responsibility for owning how they listen, and a world of new possibilities will emerge for them.

Remind your clients that they are always listening to something. What they listen for determines what they get from their conversations. Too often, many of your clients will typically listen in a casual or unfocused way and come away with little. Have them notice how often they catch themselves listening to their own thoughts and internal chatter instead of to what the other person is saying. Remind them that they are either listening to what is being said or to what that little voice in their head is telling them about it. All it takes to be powerful in listening is your clients’ deliberately stated intention to do so and rigorously returning themselves to their commitment when they notice that they are not.

To generate a powerful listening posture, encourage them to listen for possibilities. Suggest that they listen for the other person’s values, concerns and commitments. Recommend that they get into the other person’s world and truly listen for what it’s like to be them. Challenge your clients to access their personal power by continually asking themselves, “What am I listening to now?”

- So, with the intention of championing your clients in expanding their ability to listen powerfully on a daily basis, suggest to them that they begin to pay attention to what their listening is for the people they speak. Support them to identify if their listening attitude is a generous one that assumes the other person to be magnificent or one that makes the other person small.

- Challenge them to consciously generate an empowered listening by listening for value and contribution in every conversation, regardless of the person’s style of speaking or the opinion your client may hold about them. Remind them that may have to suspend that opinion in order to be effective and have them show up for them as powerful.

- In each conversation, suggest that your clients notice the listening they are speaking into. Is it an impatient, angry, know-it-all or distracted listening? Have them describe each person’s listening and consider how it may have affected whether they were heard accurately.
- Have your clients practice managing the listening they speak into. If the person is not paying attention to them, suggest that they respectfully stop the conversation to ask if perhaps it’s not a good time to have the conversation. If your clients are being listened to in a way that does not support their conversations, encourage them to address their concern up front. Have them take responsibility for being heard without being hostile or combative.

- As your clients take on the regular habit of examining how they and others listen, their conversations will take on a whole new power and direction.

Remind your clients to record their observations in their journal daily as they go about having their conversations.